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(1479) Proposal to conserve the name *Bouteloua gracilis* (Kunth) Griffiths against *B. gracilis* Vasey (*Poaceae*)

Kancheepuram N. Gandhi¹, John H. Wiersema² & Robert J. Soreng³

- (1479) *Bouteloua gracilis* (Kunth) Griffiths, Contr. U.S. Natl. Herb. 14: 375. 1912 [*Gram.*], *nom. cons. prop.*

Type: Mexico: “crescit in crepidinibus et devexis montis porphyritici La Buffa de Guanaxuato Mexicanorum” *Humboldt & Bonpland s.n.* [B-W No. 1628 (IDC microfiche!); isotype: ?P, US!].

- (H) *Bouteloua gracilis* Vasey in Watson & Rothrock, Rep. U.S. Geogr. Surv., *Wheeler* 287. 1879.

Holotype: U.S.A., Arizona, Riley’s Well, Wheeler’s Expedition, 1874, *J. T. Rothrock* 701 (US).

The North American plains grass, blue grama, has for a long time been treated as a member of the genus *Bouteloua* Lag. as *B. gracilis* (A. Gray, Man. Bot., ed. 2, 553. 1856; Griffiths, Contr. U.S. Natl. Herb. 14: 375. 1912; Hitchcock., Man. Grasses U.S., ed. 2, 828. 1951; Bor, Grasses Burma, Ceylon, India & Pakistan 464. 1960; Correll & Johnston, Man. Vasc. Pl. Texas 245. 1970; Gould, Grasses Texas 351. 1975; Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard. 66: 392. 1980 (“1979”); Holmgren & Holmgren in A. Cronquist & al. (eds.), Intermount. Fl. 6: 443. 1977; Soil Conservation Service, Natl. List Sci. Pl. Names 1: 35. 1982; McVaugh, Fl. Novogaliciana 14: 88. 1983; Sutherland in Great Plains Flora Association (ed.), Fl. Gr. Plains 1141. 1986; Kartesz & Gandhi, Phytologia 69(4): 302. 1990; Hatch & al., Checkl. Vasc. Pl. Texas 23. 1990; Watson & Dallwitz, Grass Gen. World 167. 1992; Columbus in J. C. Hickman (ed.), Jepson Man. 1239. 1993; Arnow in Welsh & al. (eds.), Utah Fl., ed. 2, 796. 1993; Kartesz, Synonym. Checkl. Vasc. Fl. U.S., Canad. & Greenl., ed. 2, 1: 427. 1994). A few modern authors, however, recognise it in the segregate genus *Chondrosum* Desv. as *C. gracile* Kunth (e.g., Clayton & Renvoize, Kew Bull., Addit. Ser. 13: 246. 1986).

Until recently, the authorship of the combination *Bouteloua gracilis* has generally, but incorrectly, been cited as “(Kunth) Lag. ex Steud. 1840” (Gould l.c., 1975; Holmgren & Holmgren, l.c.), but the combination was not made validly until Griffiths (l.c.) did so inadvertently in 1912. Although Gould (l.c., 1980) corrected the situation by attributing the combination to Griffiths, a few later works maintained Steudel as the author (e.g., McVaugh, l.c.; Arnow, l.c.). (For details see synonymy below).

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Regardless of the correct or incorrect combining authorship, the name *B. gracilis* has been widely used for the blue grama grass. However, a few recent works have recognised that, with the later valid publication of the combination, the name *B. gracilis* (Kunth) Lag. ex Griffiths is a later homonym of *B. gracilis* Vasey (l.c.) and is illegitimate (e.g., The International Seed Testing Association, List Stabil. Pl. Names, ed. 3, 23. 1988; Encke & al., Zander Handw.-Buch Pfl.-Namen, ed. 13, 143. 1984; ed. 14, 148. 1993; ed. 15, 148. 1994). In these works, the name *B. oligostachya* (Nutt.) Torr. ex A. Gray replaces *B. gracilis* (Kunth) Lag. ex Griffiths for the blue grama grass.

According to Gould (l.c., 1980: 393), blue grama grass is one “of the most important range species of the plains regions of North America”. Although this grass occurs from just north of the Canadian border to Mexico, it is mainly widespread in the southwestern United States wherein it and *B. curtipendula* (Michx.) Torr. “provide a large proportion of the native forage consumed by domesticated animals” (fide Gould).

Even though alternative names, such as *Bouteloua oligostachya* and *Chondrosum gracile* exist, the name *B. gracilis* has been very widely used for the blue grama grass, a fact that is evident not only from the references listed above, but also from a subject search of the AGRICOLA literature database (on Title – Abstract – Key Terms – Geo. Area). This yielded 340 references to *B. gracilis* and an additional 34 to blue grama alone (1910–1997). No references were found to *Chondrosum* (or orth. var. *Chondrosium*) *gracile* or to *B. oligostachya*.

Regarding the status of *B. gracilis* Vasey, except for its listing as a synonym of *B. aristidoides* (Kunth) Griseb., both in *Index Kewensis* and in Gould (l.c., 1980: 388), the name has remained in obscurity. [Gould erred in treating *B. gracilis* Vasey as a later homonym of the invalid “*Bouteloua gracilis* Lag., 1840”, which is an apparent contradiction to his ascription of *B. gracilis* to Griffiths on p. 392.] Gould’s treatment of *B. gracilis* has since been consistently adopted throughout North America, thereby perpetuating its erroneous usage.

Therefore, it is emphasised that the name *Bouteloua gracilis* (Kunth) Griffiths 1912 must be conserved against *B. gracilis* Vasey 1879 to avoid serious disadvantageous change in the nomenclature of blue grama grass. The authorship and synonymy are, as follows.

Bouteloua gracilis (Kunth) Lag. ex Griffiths, Contr. U. S. Natl. Herb. 14: 375. 1912, non Vasey 1879.

≡ *Chondrosum gracile* Kunth, Nov. Gen. Sp. 1: 176. May 1816; Steudel, Nomencl. Bot., ed. 2, 1: 355. 1840.

“*Bouteloua gracilis*” Lag., Elench. Pl. 3. Jun–Dec 1816, *nom. nud.*

≡ *Actinochloa gracilis* (Kunth) Willd. ex Roem. & Schult., Syst. Veg. 2: 418. 1817.

(=) *Atheropogon oligostachyus* Nutt., Gen. N. Amer. Pl. 1: 78. 1818.

≡ *Atheropogon gracilis* (Kunth) Spreng., Syst. Veg. ed. 16, 1: 293. late 1824 (“1825”).

≡ *Eutriana gracilis* (Kunth) Trin., Gram. Unifl. Sesquifl. 240. Oct–Nov 1824 (non Hook. f. 1847).

- (=) *Bouteloua oligostachya* (Nutt.) Torr. ex A. Gray, Man. Bot., ed. 2, 553. 1856.

Although *Chondrosum gracile* Kunth likely just predates publication of Lagasca's *Elenchus* (1816), Lagasca gave no reference to link his "*Bouteloua gracilis*" to any earlier usage of the epithet. It is likely that his usage and that of Kunth both derive from Willdenow's unpublished herbarium manuscript name "*Actinochloa gracilis*".